[The Jackson Family]

715 15th St.

West Durham, N.C.

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I. L. M.

THE JACKSON FAMILY

The last of the summer petunias lent a splash of bright color to the small, smoothly-sown yard of No. 715, 15th St. On the porch, a lazy black cat curled himself against the leather cushion of the porch glider. The front door stood ajar and through it a mild breeze carried the refreshing coolness of an early September day into the living room to the right of the small entrance hall. The fresh [serim?] curtains at the windows stirred lightly with now and then a flurry when a cross current brought a stronger and chillier breeze into the room.

The day was Saturday of September, 1938. It was a good day of a good year for James Jackson. The day was good because only that morning he had made the last payment on his eighteen-months old Plymouth car. The year was good because in January he had been made second hand in the spinning room at $27.50 a week. The twelve percent cut which came in July reduced his wage to a little less than $25 but that left enough for him to live on comfortably. His wife worked in the mill until two months ago and made $15 a week.

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They have been able to save for their first child which will arrive within the next month.

James is thirty-two and his straight, well-built body, clear complexion and bright eyes stand as proof of the good health he has always enjoyed. He and his wife now share their four-room house with his mother and his eighteen-year old brother, Clarence. The young Jacksons and Mrs. Jackson occupy the two bedrooms and Clarence sleeps on a cot in the roam which is used as a combination of kitchen and dining room. This three-purpose room has in it no space for storing the canned fruits and vegetables which the older Mrs. Jackson prepared during the summer. Consequently the jars have been arranged in neat rows across the corner near the fireplace in the living room and just opposite the upright piano. There are two hundred jars of beans, tomatoes, corn, peaches, pickles, and preserves. All the vegetables were gathered from the Jackson garden just back of the house.

James Jackson sat in his living room on this Saturday in September and discussed the company for which he works. “I don't know of a better company to work for,” he declared. “The officials here have the worker's interests at heart. They've furnished us with 3 a fine Auditorium where a person can find free amusement if he wants to. They order coal in big lots and sell it to us without profit for $6.50 a ton. They keep the houses in good repair and rent them to us for almost nothing. I pay $1.50 a week for my four rooms, bath room, and garage. If I didn't live in a company house I'd have to pay $5 a week for a house not kept in as good condition to this.

“There are very few people working in the mill who make less than $12 a week when they work full time. Some of the help's sent out now and then as much as a day out of a week to rest but never more than that. We make standard goods — sheets and pillow cases, you know — and we generally have orders on hand all the time.

“I feel like people living here at this mill have as good or better chance for a decent living as most people working in stores, in offices, and such places where they don't make any more than we do and have a sight more house rent to pay.

“Of course the company don't have enough houses for all its help. There's some working in the mills here that's paying $20 a month for rent because they caint get a company house. But the majority of us has the advantage over other working people when it comes to rent.”

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There was about James Jackson spirit of well-being as he talked of the company and of his own life. It seemed to spring from his conviction that he had worked for what he had gotten and had gotten what he had worked for.

James, one of eight children, was born on his father's small farm in Sampson County and lived there until he was ten years old. By that time his father, who had quit farming for railroad work a few years earlier, had decided that a steady wage was better than the uncertainties of farm production and farm prices. He moved his family first to Erwin Cotton Mill at Erwin, then to the East Durham Mill, and later to the West Durham will where James still lives. The elder Jackson died a year after his youngest child, Clarence, was born. Up to that time all the children of school age had been able to remain in school. James completed the eighth grade after which he began a course in bookkeeping. Convinced that he was not suited to the type of work he quit the course and went into the spinning room at the age of fifteen. There he has remained and availed himself of his opportunities to learn all he could about his work. He has attended a number of the textile courses offered in night school 5 by the mill officials and he completed a correspondence course in textile work from the International Correspondence Schools.

Six years after the elder Jackson's death his widow decided to moved out into the country, but not too far for her children to drive into Durham for their work. She bought on time-payment a home and six acres at Bragtown, about five miles out, and here three of her children not yet old enough to work in the mill raised truck produce. The children who

worked in town took the vegetables and sold them to certain stores which could handle all the small farm could supply.

After eight years the farm was paid for and the younger members of the family had secured work in the mill. Mrs. Jackson rented her farm and moved back to the mill village. Today all of her children except Clarence are married, and half of them live at the mill while the others live in the country.

Clarence who is now in the tenth grade has supported himself by working in the mill since he was fifteen. He quit school after finishing the ninth grade and after a lapse of three years he has decided to finish high school. He is one of the sixty-five students attending the Durham High School Co-operative 6 Class, a class organized for working boys ambitious to complete their high school training. It is conducted so as to fit in with the working schedule of all of its members. Clarence who works in the mill from 3:30 in the afternoon until 12 at night attends classes in the morning from 9 o'clock until 12. “it's pretty hard,” he says, “but I'm going to stick it through this year and two more. After that, I don't know what I'll do, but at least I won't be turned down for a job just because I don't have a high school education. I may stay right on in the mill and work up like James. There's not many jobs for the working man that pays more than $25 a week.

“And they don't come by just wishing for 'em” James told his brother, that Saturday he'd finished paying for his car.